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221052Z Mar 01

CONFIDENTIAL PTQ2015

PAGE 01 HARARE 01096 01 OF 03 221147Z
ACTION DRL-02

INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	CIAE-00	COME-00	DODE-00	SRPP-00	EB-00
	EUR-00	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01
	L-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPM-01
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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8482
INFO NSC WASHDC
DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC
SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 001096

SIPDIS

DRL/IL FOR KBRYANT
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PAGE 02 HARARE 01096 01 OF 03 221147Z
TAGS: [ELAB](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: ZIMBABWE'S NEW LABOR LEADERS PURSUE TRADITIONAL
LABOR CONCERNS WHILE CONTINUING SUPPORT OF THE MDC

REFTEL: HARARE 1054

CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE D' AFFAIRES EARL M. IRVING FOR
REASONS 1.5 (B/D).

SUMMARY

11. (C) ON MARCH 21, LABOFF MET WITH THE NEW SECRETARY-
GENERAL OF THE ZIMBABWE CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS (ZCTU),
WELLINGTON CHIBHEBHE, AND THE NEW PRESIDENT, LOVEMORE
MATOMBO, BOTH EXPERIENCED AND ARTICULATE LABOR
ORGANIZERS, WHO INDICATED THAT THEY INTEND TO
AGGRESSIVELY ENGAGE THE GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE (GOZ) ON
A RANGE OF TRADITIONAL LABOR ISSUES. THESE NEW LABOR
LEADERS WOULD LIKE TO SEE PASSAGE OF A HARMONIZED LABOR
BILL ACCEPTABLE TO LABOR, ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NECESSARY
CONDITIONS FOR LABOR TO CONSIDER ENTERING A SOCIAL
CONTRACT WITH GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS, LABOR INPUT IN
THE PRIVATIZATION OF PARASTATALS, AND GOZ FUNDING FOR
ZCTU WORKPLACE HIV/AIDS EDUCATION PROGRAMS. CHIBHEBHE
AND MATOMBO BOTH SAID THAT THERE WAS NO TRUTH TO A
RECENT NEWSPAPER ARTICLE THAT STATED NEW ELECTIONS FOR
THE LABOR LEADERSHIP WOULD BE REQUIRED (REFTEL),
CLAIMING IT WAS PART OF THE GOZ/ZANU-PF'S ONGOING
ATTEMPTS TO GAIN CONTROL OVER THE LABOR MOVEMENT.

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PAGE 03 HARARE 01096 01 OF 03 221147Z
ALTHOUGH BOTH MEN REPEATED THEIR PUBLIC PROCLAMATIONS
THAT THE ZCTU IS AN INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATION, THEY
ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE ZCTU MEMBERSHIP STRONGLY SUPPORTS
THE MDC AND THE ORGANIZATION WILL HAVE A KEY ROLE TO
PLAY IN THE UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. END
SUMMARY.

LOBBYING FOR PRO-LABOR LEGISLATION

12. (C) MATOMBO SPOKE EXTENSIVELY ON THE HARMONIZED LABOR
BILL THAT IS CURRENTLY BEING CONSIDERED BY PARLIAMENT.
THIS BILL HAS BEEN GATHERING DUST FOR THE LAST NINE
YEARS, AFTER BEING DRAFTED WITH THE INPUT OF THE
INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION (ILO). ACCORDING TO
MATOMBO, THE GOZ HAS MADE SUCH SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO
THE LABOR BILL, AS IT DID WITH THE 1999 DRAFT ZIMBABWE
CONSTITUTION, THAT THE ZCTU OPPOSES IT IN ITS CURRENT
FORM. HE INDICATED THAT THE MINISTRY OF LABOR, UNDER
THE EXISTING BILL, WOULD HAVE POWERS TO DECERTIFY

UNIONS, A FACT THAT WOULD IN EFFECT MAKE THE UNIONS
SUBSERVIENT TO THE GOZ. RATHER THAN TREATING ALL
WORKERS EQUALLY, WHICH THE ZCTU STRONGLY WANTS IN A
HARMONIZED LABOR LAW, THE BILL WOULD CONTINUE TO TREAT
CIVIL SERVANTS DIFFERENTLY FROM OTHER UNIONIZED WORKERS.
PARASTATAL WORKERS WOULD BE DEEMED ESSENTIAL, AND
THEREFORE PROHIBITED FROM ENGAGING IN INDUSTRIAL
ACTIONS. THE ZCTU IS ACTIVELY OPPOSING THE GOZ EFFORT
TO "FAST-TRACK" THIS BILL THROUGH PARLIAMENT BY
INTENSIVELY LOBBYING MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT FROM BOTH THE
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 HARARE 01096 01 OF 03 221147Z
ZANU-PF AND MDC PARTIES. MATOMBO WAS NOT SURE WHETHER
LABOR WILL SUCCEED IN THIS EFFORT GIVEN THE ZANU-PF
MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT.

CONDITIONS NOT RIGHT FOR A SOCIAL CONTRACT

13. (C) CHIBHEBHE SPOKE AT LENGTH ABOUT WHY THE ZCTU
CANNOT AT THIS TIME ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS FOR A SOCIAL
CONTRACT WITH THE GOZ AND BUSINESS. ONE LABOR
PRECONDITION FOR SUCH TALKS IS AGREEMENT ON A BASIC
MINIMUM WAGE FOR ALL WORKERS THAT IS ABOVE THE POVERTY
DUM LINE FOR A FAMILY OF FOUR. THE GOZ HAS THUS FAR
REFUSED TO AGREE TO THIS. ANOTHER PRECONDITION IS THAT
AGREEMENT ON AN ACCEPTABLE NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE BY
LABOR SHOULD NOT PRECLUDE THE RIGHT OF UNIONS TO ENTER
INTO INDUSTRIAL ACTIONS, WHICH IS WHAT THE GOZ WANTS.
LASTLY CHIBHEBHE STATED THAT A RETURN TO THE RULE OF LAW
IS A CRITICAL PRECONDITION, NOTING THAT LABOR IS
EXTREMELY CONCERNED BY THE CURRENT LAWLESSNESS IN THE
COUNTRY. HE CONTINUED THAT AS A RESULT OF THE ZCTU ROLE
IN FOUNDING THE OPPOSITION MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC
CHANGE (MDC), THE GOZ AND ZANU-PF VIEW LABOR AS PART OF

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PAGE 01 HARARE 01096 02 OF 03 221148Z
ACTION DRL-02

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PAGE 02 HARARE 01096 02 OF 03 221148Z
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THE OPPOSITION. CHIBHEBHE REVEALED THAT MOST RURAL
AREAS ARE NOW "NO-GO" ZONES FOR UNION ORGANIZERS, WHO
WILL BE ATTACKED BY MARAUDING BANDS OF "WAR VETS" IF
THEY ARE DISCOVERED DOING UNION BUSINESS. IN PRACTICE,
THE BAN MEANS THAT MOST COMMERCIAL FARM WORKERS, MANY
MINE WORKERS, AND CIVIL SERVANTS IN THE RURAL AREAS ARE
BEING DEPRIVED OF THEIR RIGHT TO UNION REPRESENTATION, A
TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE STATE OF AFFAIRS TO THE ZCTU
LEADERSHIP.

PRIVATIZATION MUST BE TRANSPARENT

14. (C) MATOMBO THEN TURNED TO THE ZCTU POSITION ON

PRIVATIZATION OF GOZ-OWNED PARASTATALS. HE RECOGNIZED THAT PRIVATIZATION IS NECESSARY AND THAT GLOBALIZATION AND FOREIGN INVESTMENT ARE INEVITABLE TRENDS THAT WILL PLAY A ROLE IN THIS PROCESS. HOWEVER, THE ZCTU IS OPPOSED TO THE WAY PRIVATIZATION IS CURRENTLY BEING HANDLED BY THE GOZ. MATOMBO STATED THAT THE GOZ IS NOT CONSULTING WITH THE UNIONS THAT REPRESENT PARASTATAL WORKERS, AS IT SHOULD. OF EQUAL CONCERN IS THE FACT THAT PRIVATIZATION IS CURRENTLY BEING CONDUCTED TO BENEFIT A CLIQUE OF POWERFUL PEOPLE CONNECTED TO ZANU-PF, HE CLAIMED. THE "INDIGENIZATION PROCESS" ESPOUSED BY THE GOZ TO CREATE BLACK OWNERS OF PRIVATIZED

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 HARARE 01096 02 OF 03 221148Z
PARASTATALS, HE SAID, IS JUST A COVER FOR HANDING OVER THESE COMPANIES TO A FEW POWERFUL ZANU-PF SUPPORTERS. THE NEW ZCTU LEADERSHIP INTENDS TO ENGAGE THE GOZ ON THIS ISSUE AND WILL LOBBY FOR A TRANSPARENT PRIVATIZATION PROCESS IN WHICH LABOR WILL HAVE A ROLE IN THE PROCESS AND A STAKE IN THE PRIVATIZED PARASTATALS.

ADDRESSING THE HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIC

15. (C) CHIBHEBHE AND MATOMBO BOTH ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIC IS A CRITICAL ISSUE THAT LABOR MUST ADDRESS. THEY BOTH HAVE SEEN THE RAVAGES OF THE EPIDEMIC FIRSTHAND THROUGH THE DEATHS OF WORKERS. MATOMBO CRITICIZED THE GOZ, AND PRESIDENT MUGABE PERSONALLY, FOR NOT DOING MORE TO COMBAT THIS PROBLEM. LABOR'S POSITION IS THAT THE EPIDEMIC SHOULD BE DECLARED A NATIONAL CATASTROPHE AND THERE SHOULD BE AN URGENT CAMPAIGN INITIATED BY THE GOZ TO ADDRESS IT ON MULTIPLE FRONTS. THE ZCTU HAS AN OFFICE DEDICATED TO HIV/AIDS EDUCATION OF ITS MEMBERSHIP, BUT IS HAMPERED BY LIMITED RESOURCES. CHIBHEBHE STATED THAT THE ZCTU IS GOING TO REQUEST THAT THE GOZ PROVIDE SOME OF THE MONEY CONTROLLED BY THE NATIONAL AIDS COUNCIL, RAISED THROUGH AN AIDS TAX ON WORKERS' SALARIES, TO THE ZCTU SO THAT IT CAN EXPAND ITS EFFORTS AGAINST THE EPIDEMIC. MATOMBO ADDED THAT LABOR RECOGNIZES THAT UNIONS CAN PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN HIV/AIDS EDUCATION BECAUSE ITS ORGANIZATION IS DISPERSED BROADLY THROUGHOUT SOCIETY.

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 HARARE 01096 02 OF 03 221148Z

SCHISMS IN THE ZCTU?

16. (C) MATOMBO AND CHIBHEBHE DENIED THAT THERE ARE DIVISIONS WITHIN THE LABOR FEDERATION. THEY SPECIFICALLY REFERRED TO A RECENT ARTICLE IN THE GOZ-CONTROLLED "THE SUNDAY MAIL" AS A ZANU-PF PROPAGANDA THAT WAS FULL OF LIES (REFTEL). CHIBHEBHE ADDED THAT THE GOZ/ZANU-PF ARE STILL SMARTING FROM THEIR CANDIDATES BEING SHUT OUT IN THE ELECTIONS FOR THE NEW ZCTU EXECUTIVE COUNCIL. THEY ACCUSED THE FORMER ACTING ZCTU SECRETARY-GENERAL (AND ZANU-PF CANDIDATE FOR SECRETARY-

SIPDIS
GENERAL AT THE LAST CONGRESS), ISIDORE ZINDOGA, OF LEADING THE EFFORT TO DISCREDIT THE NEW LEADERSHIP. MATOMBO REVEALED THAT AT THE FIRST FULL ZCTU GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING ON MARCH 17, THERE WAS NOT A DISSENTING VOICE AGAINST THE NEWLY ELECTED LEADERSHIP. HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THE VERY PEOPLE (ZINDOGA AND COMPANY) WHO ARE NOW SAYING THAT THE CONGRESS WAS TAINTED WERE THE ONES WHO ORGANIZED IT.

ZCTU: INDEPENDENT BUT NOT NEUTRAL

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CONFIDENTIAL PTQ2017

PAGE 01 HARARE 01096 03 OF 03 221148Z
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[17](#). (C) CHIBHEBHE AND MATOMBO BOTH REPEATED THEIR PUBLIC
PROCLAMATIONS THAT THE ZCTU IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH ANY
POLITICAL PARTY AND WILL FOLLOW ITS OWN INDEPENDENT NON-
PARTISAN APPROACH IN PURSUING WORKERS' INTERESTS.
LABOFF ASKED HOW THIS POSITION MESHED WITH THE ZCTU'S
CREATION OF THE MDC. CHIBHEBHE RESPONDED THAT THE ZCTU
HAD TO TAKE THIS POSITION, BECAUSE IF THE MDC WERE TO
FORM THE NEXT GOVERNMENT, THIS INDEPENDENCE WOULD ALLOW
LABOR TO CONTINUE TO AGGRESSIVELY PURSUE WORKER
INTERESTS. HOWEVER, MATOMBO QUICKLY ADDED THAT IT WAS
NO SECRET THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF WORKERS SUPPORT THE
MDC, AND WILL VOTE FOR ITS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN THE
NEXT ELECTION. HE SAID THAT ZANU-PF'S CURRENT URBAN
CAMPAIGN OF "GOING INTO THE TOWNSHIPS AND BEATING UP
WORKERS" IS ONLY HARDENING THE SUPPORT FOR THE MDC AMONG
WORKERS.

COMMENT

[18](#). (C) THE NEW SECRETARY-GENERAL AND PRESIDENT OF THE
ZCTU COME ACROSS AS HIGHLY ARTICULATE LEADERS. THEIR
ABILITIES WILL CLEARLY SERVE THEM WELL IN FURTHERING THE
INTERESTS OF THE ZCTU MEMBERSHIP AT A TIME OF ECONOMIC
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PAGE 03 HARARE 01096 03 OF 03 221148Z
COLLAPSE AND POLITICAL CONFRONTATION. CHIBHEBHE AND
MATOMBO BARELY CONCEALED THE FACT THAT THEY ARE STRONGLY
PRO-MDC. IGNORING THEIR OWN PROTESTATIONS OF THE
APOLITICAL NATURE OF THE ZCTU, THEY FREELY ACKNOWLEDGED
THAT THE FEBRUARY ZCTU CONGRESS RESULTED IN THE ELECTION
OF A PRO-MDC ZCTU EXECUTIVE. THEIR COMMENTS REGARDING
THE COST TO LABOR OF THE GOZ'S MISMANAGEMENT OF THE
ECONOMY (JUST ONE EXAMPLE BEING THAT AN ESTIMATED 20
PERCENT OF UNION WORKERS HAVE LOST THEIR JOBS IN THE
LAST 12 MONTHS), COMBINED WITH THE ZANU-PF CAMPAIGN OF
REPRESSION DIRECTED AT UNION ORGANIZERS AND WORKERS,
CLEARLY PUTS THE ZCTU IN OPPOSITION TO PRESIDENT MUGABE.
WE BELIEVE THE NEW ZCTU EXECUTIVE WILL USE THE LABOR
MOVEMENTS' ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES TO HELP DELIVER THE
VOTE FOR THE MDC CANDIDATE IN THE UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTIONS. END COMMENT.

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